

AIR INTEGRATION

a. General. The air integration battlefield operating system demonstrated several strengths including the integration of fixed wing air assets into the division's scheme of maneuver. The division did a good job of submitting air interdiction (AI) nominations for the integrated tasking order (ITO) inclusion. Division AI nominations were consistent in keeping with the theater, component, and corps guidance for targeting. The majority of close air support (CAS) used at the division level was either XCAS or GCAS, and used, primarily, as a reactionary force. The division caused several coordination difficulties due entirely to greater than anticipated rate of movement. These difficulties were overcome by effective coordination through higher and had negligible impact on operations. Areas that need review and training emphasis include:

b. Issue: Division did not publish an air support annex for the division operations order (OPORD).

(1) Discussion. Division had planned on using CAS and AI during the battle, but little mention of CAS throughout the fires support annex was insufficient for the observer/controller (O/C) to grasp the overall dimension of AI/CAS involvement in the WFX. Appendix 1 to the fires support annex was reserved for an air support annex, but was not used.

(2) Recommendation. Publish an air support annex. State how AI and CAS will be used by phase in support of the essential fire support tasks (EFSTs) supporting decisive operations. Focus on target selection and what are the desired effects. Without this plan in written form, there is nothing to measure successful air integration against. When fire support is planned, the effects are more likely to be effective. Reference: Page IV-1, Joint Pub 3-09, Doctrine for Joint Fire Support.

c. Issue: Annex D (Fire Support) to OPORD 03-02 (BCTP Warfighter Exercise) did not provide additional guidance on the desired effects against specific weapons systems.

(1) Discussion. The division did not provide clear guidance for AI other than broad generalizations that did not include targeted weapon systems, desired effects, or timing. The division risked losses of AI targets because their nominations were not detailed enough to compete well with other theater objectives.

(2) Recommendation. Division should include in their fire support annex the division's target priorities, which should align with corps, LCC, and JFC priorities. When fire support is planned, the effects are more likely to be effective. Reference: Page IV-1, Joint Pub 3-09, Doctrine for Joint Fire Support.

d. Issue: Use of intra-theater airlift.

(1) Discussion. Approximately half way through the WFX, the division started initiating emergency airlift requests. The division did not coordinate the use of airlift during this exercise, so short-notice execution of the missions was very difficult.

(2) Recommendation. If the exercised unit plans to use airlift, it needs to be coordinated in advance during the exercise design process. Specifically, the level of play (short tons per day) needs to be specified/approved for inclusion in the combat service support paragraph of the exercise Letter of Instruction (LOI). This enables BCTP to coordinate for contractor support to execute the airlift requests. Also, the unit needs to accomplish an intra-theater airlift plan and demonstrate the capability to employ intra-theater airlift. If requesting airdrop support, this should be a task that the unit routinely accomplishes during training missions.

Considerations:

Does the division have a TACSOP/TTPs addressing routing/approval of airlift requests within the division/HHQ; planning for employment as opposed to reactive, emergency requests?

Where are the supplies going to come from?

How are the supplies getting to the APOD?

Who is going to rig the loads?

Who is going to control the airdrop (DZST)?

How are the loads going to be recovered?

(2) Recommendation. Intra-theater airlift can be a valuable means of re-supply, but it needs to be planned/coordinated/executed in a doctrinally correct manner.

e. Issue: No weighting of CAS for the main effort or distribution in support of operations at the decisive point within each phase of the operation.

(1) Discussion. The division did not provide clear guidance for CAS distribution. There was no weighting of the main effort or distribution in support of operations at the decisive point within each phase of the operation. Guidance for the employment of CAS was given in terms of targets in the essential fire support tasks.

At the division level, CAS was not planned to provide a massing of firepower towards a specific enemy weapon system, place, or time. This precluded the division from massing air support at specific maneuver events or decisive points.

CAS was used numerous times during the Warfighter. These times were almost always during opposition forces' (OPFOR) counterattacks. This indicates a reactive use of CAS rather than a pro-active use and therefore a loss of initiative. The OPFOR dictated the time and place the division used CAS.

(2) Recommendation. CAS should be planned to prepare the conditions for success or reinforce successful attacks of surface forces. CAS can halt attacks, help create breakthroughs, cover retreats, and guard flanks. To be most effective, however, CAS should be used at decisive points in battle and should normally be massed to apply concentrated combat power and saturate defenses. Reference: Page 50, Air Force Doctrine Document 1, Air Force Basic Doctrine.

f. Issue: The division requested specific munitions rather than forwarding desired effects, which allows maximum employment of airpower.

(1) Discussion. The division requested GATOR minefields in vicinity EA BUFORD at H+12 and H+40. Division needs to forward the desired effects of fixing OSC 2 forces moving south. The division should base planning on desired effects rather than specific munitions.

(2) Recommendation. The division needs to forward desired effects rather than strict target nominations, which allows those responsible for conducting joint interdiction maximum flexibility to exploit their capabilities. Reference: Page II-13, Joint Pub 3-03, Doctrine for Joint Interdiction Operations.